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REPORT OF THE MONTANA MENTAL DISABILITIES BOARD OF VISITORS ON WARM SPRINGS STATE HOSPITAL

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Thomas L. Judge
Governor

This report on Warm Springs State Hospital is the result of a site visit made by the Montana Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors on August 25, 1977. Conducting this site visit were Dr. Rummel, Patricia Boedecker, Al Bertelsen, Dr. Stimfling, and the Board's staff member Kelly Moorse. The purpose of this visit was to introduce the new Board members to the operations of Warm Springs State Hospital and to specifically visit the Forensic Unit, the Children's Unit and the Musigbrod Ward.

After this report is presented to the Superintendent of Warm Springs State Hospital, it shall be made part of the annual report of the Board of Visitors to the Honorable Governor of the State of Montana.

BOARD OF VISITORS REVIEW OF WARM SPRINGS STATE HOSPITAL

August 25, 1977

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

Since the November 9-12 visit by the Board of Visitors, Warm Springs State Hospital has had a serious reduction in the number of psychiatrists and other professional/para-professional staff. Over fifty persons were laid off due to budget restrictions, and while most of those laid off have been rehired, they replace others who quit, retired or were fired. Thus, Warm Springs State Hospital is presently under-staffed.

Dr. Xanthopoulos stated that the shortage of professional psychiatric personnel has reached a critical point and is likely to become even more serious in the near future. Without a full time psychiatrist in the Forensic Unit, Dr. Xanthopoulos covers this unit when time allows, but it is evident that patient-psychiatrist contact is minimal. Dr. Xanthopoulos is in the impossible position of handling most of the medical treatment, in addition to administering Warm Springs State Hospital.

The Board of Visitors was informed that a fully licensed psychiatrist would be joining the staff in September, with probable assignment to Region III. The administration is continually seeking properly certified doctors to fill the existing vacancies at Warm Springs. The salaries offered at the time of this site visit were considerable below the state and national scale. However, with the new pay scale issued by

the Department of Institutions, it is the hope of this Board that future staff problems will be alleviated.

Forensic Unit

The maximum security building does not yet comply with the personal rights of patients to adequate privacy, regular physical exercise, and humane and psychological environment, in accordance with Section 38-1317. A nurse told Board members that regular exercise was scheduled, but a Social Worker said it took place very infrequently. Presumably, the lack of regular physical exercise was due to the lack of sufficient staff members to carry out the program. The lack of staff does not appear to be a satisfactory excuse for noncompliance with the law.

The Warden of the State Prison continues to determine the kinds of activities in which some of the residents of the Forensic unit may participate. With this kind of control it is almost impossible to create effective treatment programs for these individuals. If prisoners are sent to Warm Springs State Hospital for treatment, but in fact cannot be treated because of imposed restrictions, there seems to be little reason to admit them to the State Mental Hospital.

A further observation of the Board of Visitors was with regard to the pysical construction of the maximum security building. Despite the fact this building is only two years old, it is structurally defective. The roof leaks and requires immediate attention.

Child Unit

The physical condition of the Child Unit is extremely unattractive and drab. Over fifty windows have been broken out and there are no security screens to protect the patients or the staff. As a result, the temperature of the building forces the patients to huddle in coats or blankets. This appalling physical environment is certainly not conducive to effective treatment programs.

The Director of the Child Unit stated that this program will be moving to new quarters sometime during the fall. If the Child Unit is to continue to exist at Warm Springs State Hospital, against this Board's recommendation, we can only hope that the forthcoming move will correct and improve the physical environment and help provide better defined treatment programs, so that patients may successfully return to their communities.

The provision for program activities during weekends and holidays continues to be inadequate. Again the excuse was the lack of staff. With the anticipated move to larger facilities, it would seem that an increase in staff would be very appropriate for this unit.

Independent Living Unit

The establishment of the Independent Living program is one of the most innovative programs established on the grounds of Warm Springs State Hospital. This unit, while having great promise in giving patients the necessary transitional training and experience for moving into a less restrictive environment, is not being utilized to its full potential. This type of

unit appears to be sound and it is the thought of this Board that such a facility should be supported and continued.

After-Care

The placement of patients from Warm Springs State Hospital to other state institutions does not, as yet, meet the requirements of the law. There seems to be a lack of understanding as to the specifics of the law on the part of the Director of the Social Workers. According to Section 38-1324 R.C.M. a treatment plan must include criteria for release to less restrictive treatment conditions and contain criteria for discharge. As part of this plan, each patient must have an individualized after-care plan. The law requires that these treatment plans be reviewed every ninety days by the professional person responsible for treatment, and in addition, be reviewed every ninety days by another professional person. Therefore, records accompanying any person being moved from one treatment facility to another, should include treatment and after-care plans. This was not found to be the case with the recent developmentally disabled patients who were moved from Warm Springs State Hospital to the Boulder River School and Hospital.